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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAA-01 SES-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 IO-13 OMB-01
TRSE-00 SSM-03 /101 W
----------042397 010543Z /14
R 310601Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 109
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, IR
SUBJ: SHARIATMADARI VIEWS

SUMMARY: IN TWO SEPARATE INTERVIEWS, AYATOLLAH SHARIATMADARI STRESSED NEED TO RETURN TO CONSTITUTION, DENIED CONTACT BETWEEN ISLAMIC AND MARXIST CIRCLES IN IRAN, AND STATED RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF IRAN DID NOT RPT NOT WANT TO "BRING ABOUT SOCIETY WHICH EXISTS IN LIBYA OR SAUDI ARABIA."
END SUMMARY

1. IN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH AND FARSI PRESS AUGUST 29 BUT WHICH HAD APPARENTLY BEEN CONDUCTED PRIOR TO AUGUST 27 GOVERNMENT CHANGE, AYATOLLAH SHARIATMADARI CLARIFIED SOME OF HIS POLITICAL VIEWS. SHARIATMADARI TOLD DER SPIEGEL REPORTERS IRAN'S RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE NOT AFTER POLITICAL POWER, BUT MERELY SEEK TO RESTORE THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTION. HE CLAIMED ORDINARY PEOPLE OF IRAN
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ROSE UP, AND THAT CLERICS HAD MERELY "GIVEN THEM OUR SUPPORT." HE TOOK ISSUE WITH IDEA THAT ISLAMIC TEACHINGS WERE IRRELEVANT BUT SAID NO MOSLEM WOULD REJECT ACHIEVEMENTS OF LAST 1400 YEARS.

2. SHARIATMADARI SAID TERM "ISLAMIC-MARXIST" WAS CONTRADICTION IN TERMS, SINCE ISLAM AND MARXISM WERE FUNDAMENTALLY

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OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER. HE SPECIFICALLY DENIED THERE HAD
BEEN CONTACT BETWEEN ISLAMIC CIRCLES AND MARXISTS IN IRAN.
HE SAID RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY SUPPORTED LAND REFORM IF IT
WAS DONE PROPERLY AND LEFT PEOPLE WITH NECESSARY TOOLS,
TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT.

3. AYATOLLAH SAID HIS OBJECTION TO IMPERIAL CALENDAR WAS
ARBITRARY CHANGING OF "VERY BASIS OF OUR HISTORY" WITHOUT
EVEN OBTAINING PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL. HE CLAIMED QOM
DEMONSTRATIONS HAD BEEN PEACEFUL UNTIL "TROOPS OPENED
FIRE ON INNOCENT AND UNARMED." HE ESCHEWED DESIRE TO RETURN
TO ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AS OTHER STATES HAD DONE, AND
ADDED "NOR DO WE WANT TO IMPLEMENT THE TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC
CODES SUCH AS CUTTING OFF THIEVES HANDS OR STONING
ADULTERERS." HE SAID SUCH ACCUSATIONS WERE OUTMODED
AND EVERY REASONABLE MOSLEM KNEW IN HIS HEART THAT SUCH
CRIMINAL CODES WERE NOT THE TRUE TENETS OF ISLAM.

4. SECOND INTERVIEW, GIVEN TO TWO PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS,
"PAKISTAN TIMES/ AND "MACHRIGH," REPORTED IN AUGUST 30
TEHRAN PRESS, ALTHOUGH INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE WHILE AMOUZEGAR
WAS STILL PRIMIN. HERE SHARIATMADARI TOOK MUCH TOUGHER
LINE. HE RECOUNTED DEVELOPMENT OF CURRENT UNREST,
BEGINNING WITH JOURNAL ARTICLE WHICH ATTACKED KHOMEINI.
ROOT OF THE PROBLEM LIES IN GOVERNMENT'S LACK OF RESPECT
FOR LAWS AND DISREGARD FOR INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL FREEDOMS.
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HE FLATLY DENIED ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHIITES AND
COMMUNISTS. GOVERNMENT HAS USED THIS "OUTRIGHT LIE" FOR
PROPAGANDA. ASKED WHETHER COMMUNISTS COULD NOT EXPLOIT
CURRENT DISSENSION, HE SAID HIS MOVEMENT WOULD STRENGTHEN
BOTH RELIGION AND NATION, AND WHEN BOTH WERE STRONG,
COMMUNISTS COULD DO NOTHING. HE WOULD CONTINUE TO ASK
PEOPLE TO KEEP CALM. IF GOVERNMENT MEETS LEGITIMATELY TO
SATISFY PEOPLE, PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED.

5. FRENCH PRESS VERSION, WHICH WAS LONGER, SHOWED S-M
TO BE LESS CONCILIATORY THAN ENGLISH PRESS INDICATED.
WHEN ASKED WHETHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS COULD RESOLVE MATTERS
AMICABLY WITH GOVERNMENT, HE REPLIED THERE WAS NO NEED FOR
AMICABLE NEGOTIATIONS: IT WAS UP TO THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT
DEMANDS OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS. WHEN ASKED WHETHER IRANIAN
ELECTORATE HAD SUFFICIENT EDUCATION TO CHOOSE PARLIAMENT
WHICH WOULD RESPECT RELIGIOUS LAWS, HE SAID: "IF THEY NEED
GUIDANCE, THE RELIGIOUS CLASS WILL POINT OUT THE WORTHY
CANDIDATES." ASKED WHETHER HIS MOVEMENT SOUGHT TO INSTALL
ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT IN IRAN, HE SAID THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF
AN ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT WAS "HIS PROFOUND WISH," BUT THAT
UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS HIS MOVEMENT SOUGHT ABOVE ALL TO

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HAVE THE CONSTITUTION ENFORCED IN ITS RELIGIOUS ASPECTS.

6. COMMENT: ABOVE GIVES FLAVOR OF SHARIATMADARI UTTERANCES, THOUGH HE MAY NOW BE MORE CIRCUMSPECT AND LESS HARD-NOSED IN WAKE OF GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE. SHARIATMADARI HAS NOT YET ISSUED OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON AUGUST 27 CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN08299
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780357-0299
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978082/aaaaabgj.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e12df25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1608823
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SHARIATMADARI VIEWS SUMMARY: IN TWO SEPARATE INTERVIEWS, AYATOLLAH SHARIATMADARI STRESSED NEED TO RETURN TO CONSTITUTION, DENIED CO
TAGS: PINS, IR, (SHARITATMADARI, AYATOLLAH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e12df25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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